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Music Trends

Characteristics of the "Billboard" Charts, 1955 to 1977



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Canadian
Radio-television and
Telecommunications
Commission

Conseil de la
radiodiffusion et des
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"Billboard" Charts,
1955 to 1977**

**John Feihl
Broadcasting Directorate
Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications Commission**

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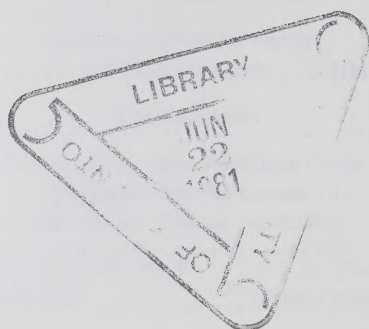
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John Feihl

Preface

In the past few years there has been a tendency for radio formats to converge and for hits to cross over (that is, to appear on more than one chart, for example the MOR and the Country charts). These trends tend to obscure the directions in which the recording and the broadcasting industries are headed. In order to try to understand these changes, to attempt to put the present situation into clearer perspective, and to develop an operational definition of a "hit" for regulatory purposes, the Broadcast Programs Directorate of the CRTC undertook a study of Top 40 radio and the Top 40 charts and the relationship between the two. However, until 1978, little information and few statistics were readily available on the subject. The release in 1978 of Joel Whitburn's book *Pop Annual (1955-1977)*, which is a compilation of all the selections which entered *Billboard's* Top 100 charts between 1955 and 1977, has made this paper practicable. It should be added that although this paper incorporates some of the findings of the Commission's study, the results do not necessarily represent the CRTC's policies, regulations, or point of view.



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Introduction

Radio's vital role in popularizing and moulding rock'n'roll from its birth to the present can hardly be overestimated. In the mid-1950s, radio began programming this amusing if not interesting new music in an attempt to appeal to the post-war generation, then entering its teen years and proving to be a financially rewarding market. Yet, over its 25-year history, rock has not only reflected the values of society and those of the post-war generation in particular, it has also profoundly influenced many aspects of Western culture. It has helped create and promote a youth culture, revolutionized popular music, and changed the consciousness of our society.

The lifestyles of rock musicians have long been glamorized, idealized, and emulated to such a degree that at times it has become difficult to distinguish the fiction of the lifestyle from reality. The occasional premature death of an artist serves as one of the few reminders that a distinction exists. The "star-making machinery" is fascinating, intricate, and perplexing; talent, work, time, and money are only some of the prerequisites for and not the guarantees of a hit.

While pop music is governed by many of the criteria common to other art forms, the basis for its success is different because it is a cultural product primarily manufactured as a short-lived commodity. The main variables governing a hit's success are:

- the quality, originality, or novelty of the music and lyrics
- the arrangement and production of the selection
- the talent of the performers
- the popularity of the performers
- the timing of the selection's release, which depends on
 - whether the selection is part of the general trend, and
 - whether it fills a void in the market or radio playlists
- the promotion of the artist and the selection, and
- luck.

This overview delves neither into the background of the hits nor that of Top 40 radio. Two excellent books on these subjects are Serge Denisoff's *Solid Gold*¹ and D.R. MacFarland's *The Development of the Top 40 Radio Format*.²

1. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1975.

2. New York, NY: Arno Press, 1979.

It is important to note that this analysis deals with the "machinery" as it operates in the United States. While the influence of the American charts and record industry, as well as US radio, is strongly felt in Canada (particularly English Canada), there are some important differences between the two countries. Unfortunately no ready reference works exist to make even the most general research into those differences practicable at this time.

The Method

This study attempts an analysis of changing music trends from 1954 to the present, as reflected in *Billboard's* Top 100 charts. Data for the study were obtained primarily from Joel Whitburn's book *Pop Annual (1955-1977)*³ which is a compilation of all the selections that appeared on *Billboard's* charts between 1955 and 1977. *Billboard* ranks its chart selections according to a combination of the amount of airplay they receive and the number of records they sell.⁴

Originally the task was to arrive at an operational definition of a hit. A brief preliminary survey based on statistics found in Whitburn's *Top Pop Records (1955-1970)*⁵ indicated that in the Top 100 there was a higher concentration of selections per decile, both between positions 1 to 40 and positions 61 to 100, than between positions 41 to 60. This led to the speculation that any selection receiving sufficient airplay could conceivably enter positions 61 to 100, while selections entering the Top 40 needed a special ingredient or additional promotion or both. The relatively low concentration of selections between positions 41 and 60 could be evidence of a natural barrier or critical mass indicator of a sort: on the one hand the music with low hit-potential never manages to get above a certain level (41-60), while on the other hand, the high hit-potential material tends to be quickly drawn into the Top 40 positions. In order to substantiate this premise and possibly discern other trends in the Top 100, a more intensive evaluation of the *Billboard* Top 100 charts was undertaken. The results are discussed in the next sections.

3. Menomonee Falls, Wisc.: Record Research, 1978.

4. Although aspects of the charts' validity (such as the consistency of the criteria for selection) might be questioned, they broadly reflect the music trends on Top 40 radio. An important thing to realize is that radio not only chose the selections which were played and which consequently appeared on the charts, radio also played the selections because they appeared on the charts. Radio, therefore, not only governed the charts but was itself governed by them.

5. Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1972.

Characteristics of the Top 100

Because of the sudden emergence and immediate popularity of rock'n'roll in the mid-1950s, the years 1954 to 1958 proved to be transitional years for both the recording and the broadcasting industries. Although the popularity of the rock era (at least with white mass audiences) began with the release of Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" in 1954, rock'n'roll began to receive extensive airplay only in 1956, due almost exclusively to Elvis Presley. The new music was at first considered to be "nigger" or "race" music and unacceptable for airplay; however, for radio, suffering from the effects of TV's advent, it soon proved to be an exciting type of entertainment to market. While radio is largely if not entirely responsible for popularizing rock'n'roll, the evolution of Top 40 radio and rock are so interrelated that one could almost say that the one would not have survived without the other.

While not every musical selection entering the Top 100 charts from the mid-1950s on has been rock or rock-oriented (witness "Amazing Grace"), rock has so permeated the charts of this period that to sort out the non-rock material for separate treatment in this study would be counterproductive.

On 2 November 1955, *Billboard* replaced its Best Selling Singles chart, which listed only 25 selections, with a Top 100 chart.

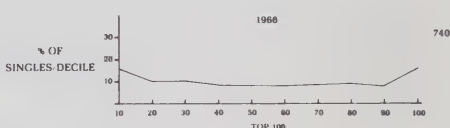
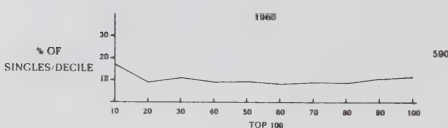
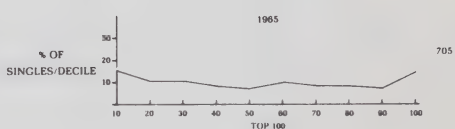
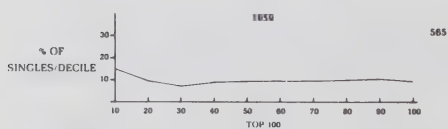
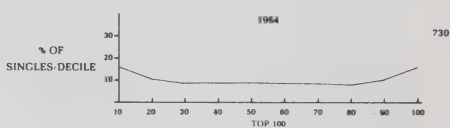
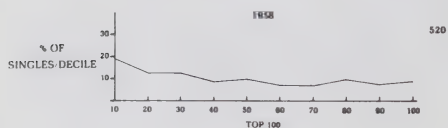
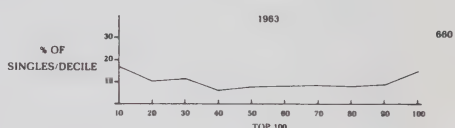
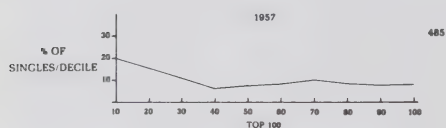
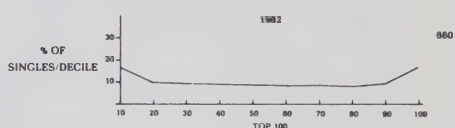
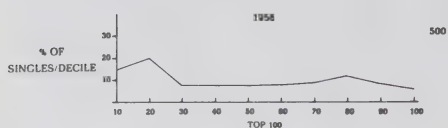
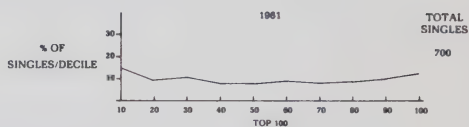
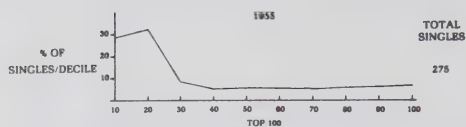
For this study, the year 1956 marks the effective beginning of both Top 40 radio and rock'n'roll.

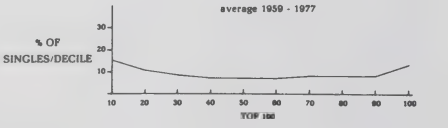
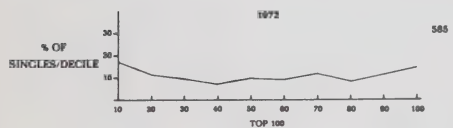
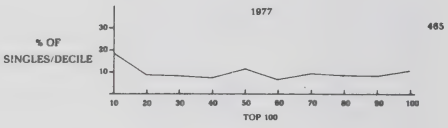
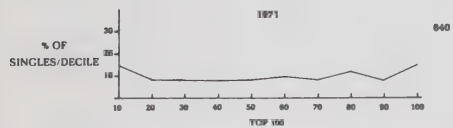
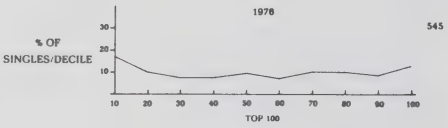
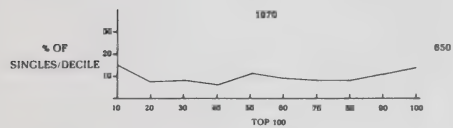
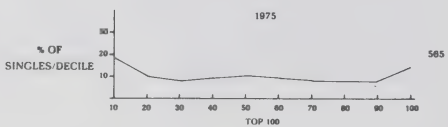
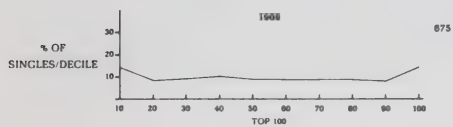
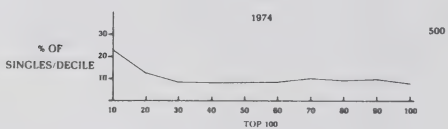
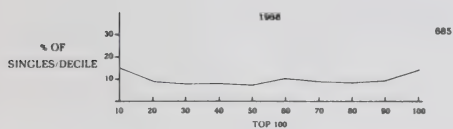
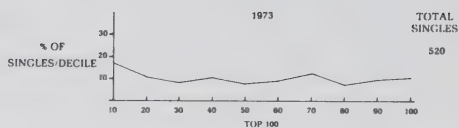
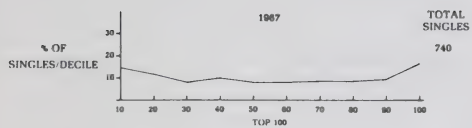
The analysis of the trends within the Top 100 charts can be divided into four areas. The first is the distribution of selections per decile throughout the years; the second, some characteristics of Number One singles; the third, the number of weeks selections remained on the charts; and the fourth, other findings.

1. Distribution of selections per decile

The charts on pages 4 and 5 show that the distribution of selections across the deciles by highest position reached is much like the curve for the average of the years concerned. This curve reveals that a higher percentage of selections enter the top two deciles or remain in positions 91 to 100 than in the other deciles. An average of 16% of the selections entered the Top 10, an average of 11% entered positions 11 to 20, and 13% remained in positions 91 to 100 between 1956 and 1977.

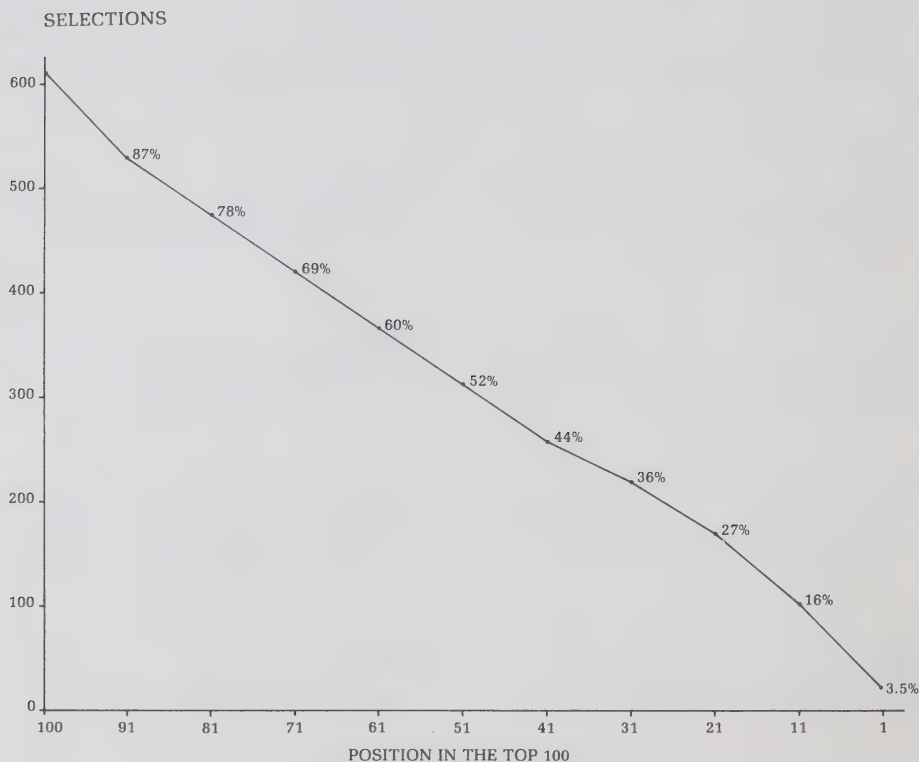
Graph A **Percentage Distribution of Selections per Decile** **According to Highest Position Reached**





Another way to represent the distribution of selections across the deciles for the yearly average over the period 1956 to 1977 is by way of graph B:

Graph B
Selections Entering Each Decile
(per average year 1956-1977)



This shows that an average of 16% of the selections entered the Top 10; 27% entered the Top 20; 36% entered the Top 30; and 44% of all selections charted on the Top 100 entered the Top 40.

The low concentration lies between positions 21 and 30 and between positions 61 and 90 at 9% of the selections per decile, and between positions 31 and 60 at 8% per decile.

The higher concentration of selections reaching positions 91 to 100 may be explained by the fact that these positions probably act as sensors. For a selection to enter the lower end of the charts means that it has been playlisted by a major station and has been recognized as having hit potential. The charts bring the selection to the attention of other stations who either play it or don't. It can be assumed that if it doesn't receive enough airplay it falls off the charts, and if it does receive airplay, it climbs the charts as far as its merit or promotion—or both—take it.

The disproportionately large percentage (27%) of selections to reach the Top 20 is the result of a combination of factors, the most important of which is probably the disproportionately heavy airplay given to selections reaching the upper deciles.⁶ Intensive rotation of a limited playlist is the principle of Top 40 radio.

It is interesting to note the unusual nature of the bottom 10 and top 20 positions of the charts: as may be observed from the graphs on pages 8 and 9, only these three deciles appear to be directly related to the number of singles entering the charts. A more critical examination of this aspect occurs under the heading "Number of weeks selections remained on the charts" on page 10.

2. Some characteristics of Number One singles

Billboard's adoption of a larger chart in late 1955 was indicative of the greater amount of airplay being given to a larger number of selections. In the early and mid-1950s, during the transition to Top 40 radio, stations' music lists gradually decreased in size while hit or repeat lists increased, as did the repetition rates of the hits. At the same time, there was also a changeover from regional to national hits which meant that more stations were playing the same selections.

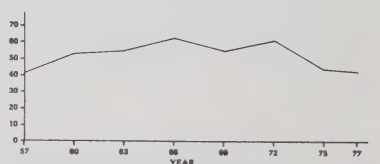
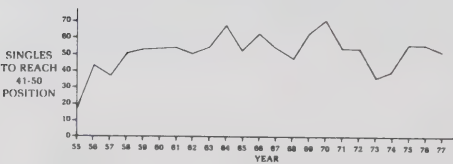
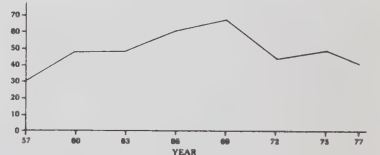
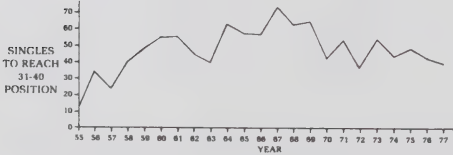
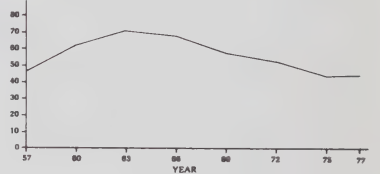
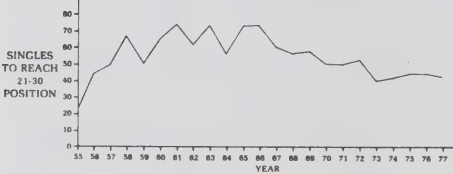
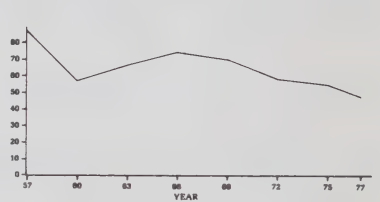
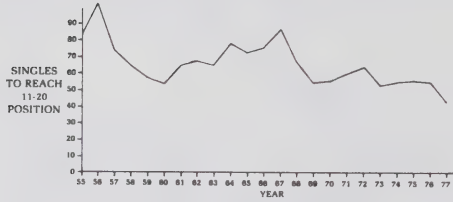
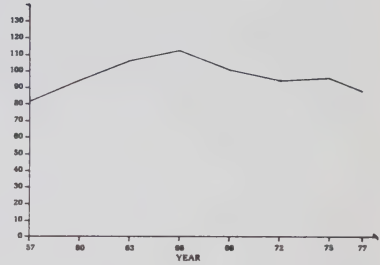
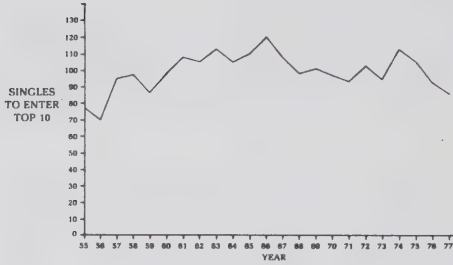
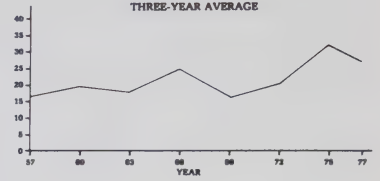
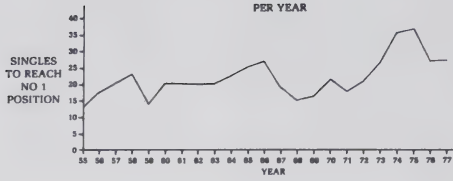
The increase in the number of chart entries from 1954 to 1958 was accompanied by an increase in the number of selections reaching the Number One position. While an average of 10 selections reached the Number One position annually between 1940 and 1955, an average of 22 selections (see graph C) reached the Number One position annually between 1956 and 1977.

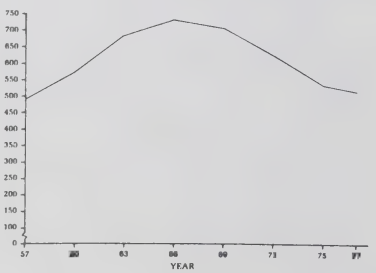
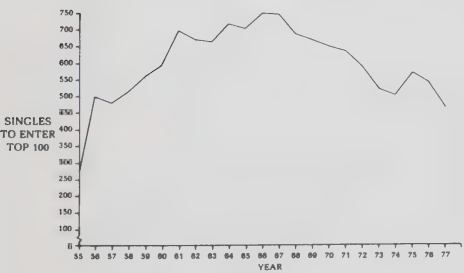
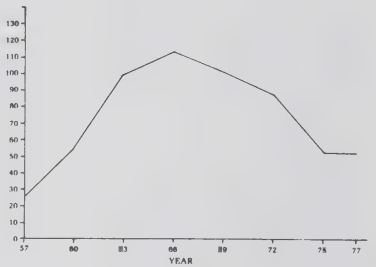
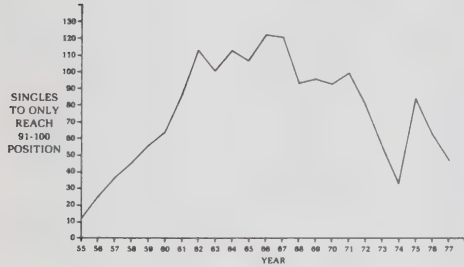
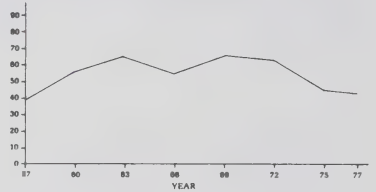
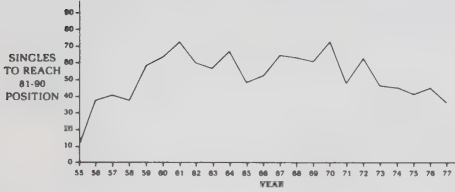
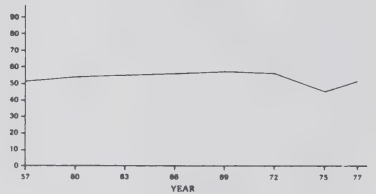
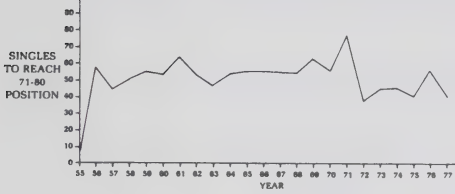
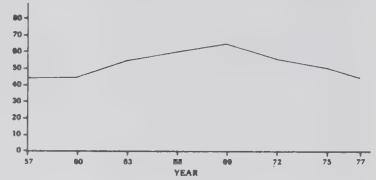
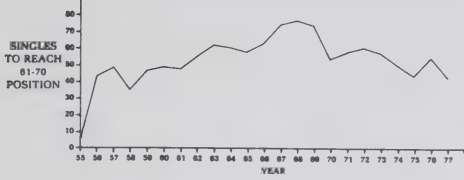
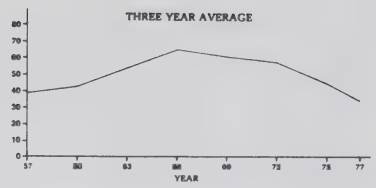
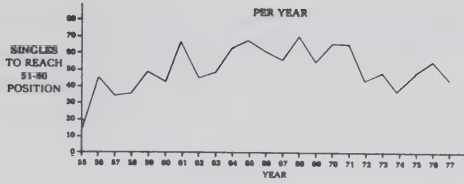
Except during the transitional years 1954 to 1958, there was little or no readily observable relationship between the number of selections entering the charts and the number of records reaching the Number One position on a yearly basis (unlike the already noted relationship between the chart entries and the Top 10).

6. While many stations have playlists of 25 to 35 selections, not all of these selections are subject to the same rotation intensity, nor are all chart-based playlists alike.

Graph C

Number of Selections per Year Reaching Highest Decile Position





In the early 1970s, many Top 40 stations reduced their playlists to 20 or 25 selections in order to further differentiate their formats from the larger playlists adopted by progressive and album-oriented stations. The result was that fewer selections were placed on the rotation list, with a consequent increase in the turnover rate of those selections. The increase in the turnover rate manifested itself primarily as an increase of Number One selections. While in 1971 18 (2.8%) of the chart entries reached the Number One position, by 1975 this number had doubled to 36 (6.4%) of the charted selections; at the same time a decrease in the number of chart entries took place. Although there was a decrease in the number of Number One selections in 1976 and 1977 (26 and 27 selections respectively), this still represented 4.8% of the chart entries in 1976 and 5.8% of the entries in 1977. The overall average of selections reaching the Number One position from 1956 to 1971 on the other hand was 3.1% of the selections charted annually.

The number of weeks that a selection remained in the Number One position obviously depends on the number of selections reaching that position during the year, and vice versa. For instance, in 1975 when 36 singles reached the Number One position, a selection averaged 1.5 weeks in that position. On the other hand, in 1968 when 15 singles became Number One hits, the selections each averaged 3.5 weeks in that position.

3. Number of weeks selections remained on the charts

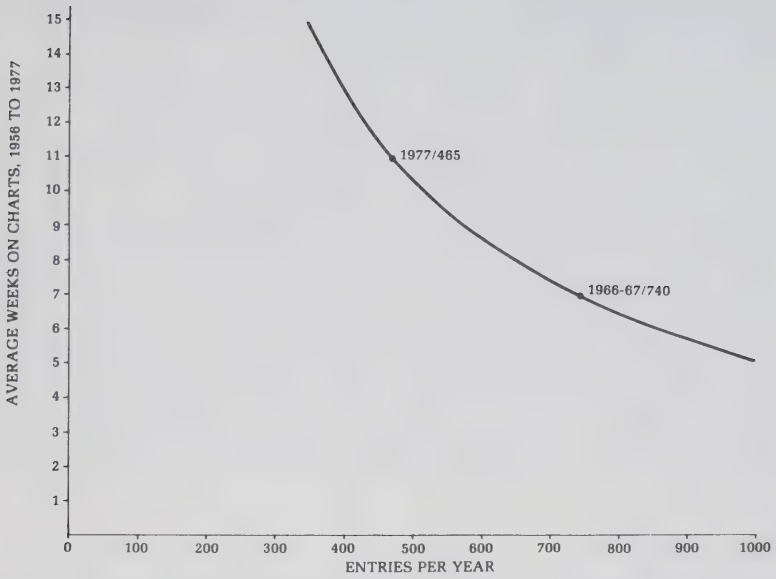
The number of weeks that the average selection remained on the charts depends on the number of chart entries in any year. Since there are 100 positions or slots per week, and there are 52 weeks in a year, then the total number of available slots per year is 5,200; graph D shows the relationship over the probable range of chart entries per year.

The number of weeks that a *particular* selection remained on the charts was generally proportional to the position it reached. Number One selections remained on the charts an average of 13.5 to 18.5 weeks; those reaching positions 31 to 40 remained 8 to 11 weeks; and those reaching no higher than positions 91 to 100 stayed on the charts an average of 1 to 3.5 weeks, as shown in graph E.

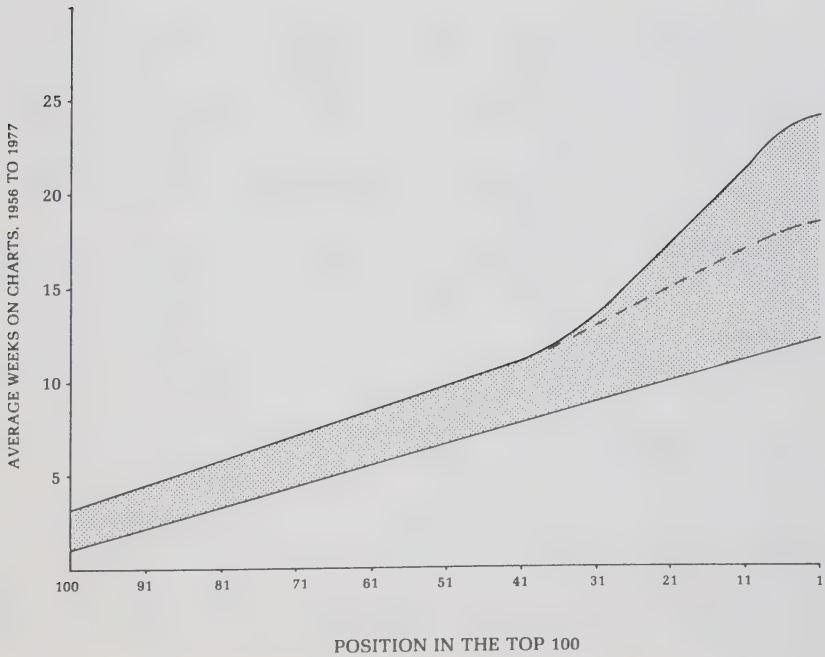
The range and its slope for the average number of weeks that selections in the six lower deciles stayed on the charts was constant. However, in the top four deciles the upward expression of the range showed considerable difference.

This is especially noticeable during the years 1956 and 1957 and 1976 and 1977, when a comparatively lower number of selections entered the charts. For the years 1956 and 1957, selections reaching the Top 10 remained on the charts an average of 24.5 weeks and for the years 1976 and 1977, selections reaching the Top 10 remained on the charts an average of 21 weeks. Selections reaching the Top 10 during these years remained on the charts on the average almost four weeks longer than for the period 1958 to 1975.

Graph D



Graph E



While an overall increase in the length of time that selections remained on the charts would be expected for any year in which a relatively low number of selections entered the charts, this increase appears to be limited to the upper deciles.

The average number of weeks that selections per decile remained on the charts over the years 1956 to 1977 is shown in graph F.

Graph G is a three-dimensional view of the two previous graphs illustrating the average number of weeks per decile that selections remained on the charts over the years 1956 to 1977.

Whether the aforementioned dimensions (deciles, weeks on charts, and chart entries per year) can be expressed in a simple relationship is not certain; other factors may obtain. It is evident, however, that there is a "behavioral" difference between the upper and lower deciles.

Not determined in these pages is whether it is the longer stay on the charts by some hits that prevents other selections from entering the charts, or whether it is a lack of new chart entries that allows hits to stay longer on the charts. This question cannot be resolved without more adequate annual record industry production data than are available at present.

4. Other findings

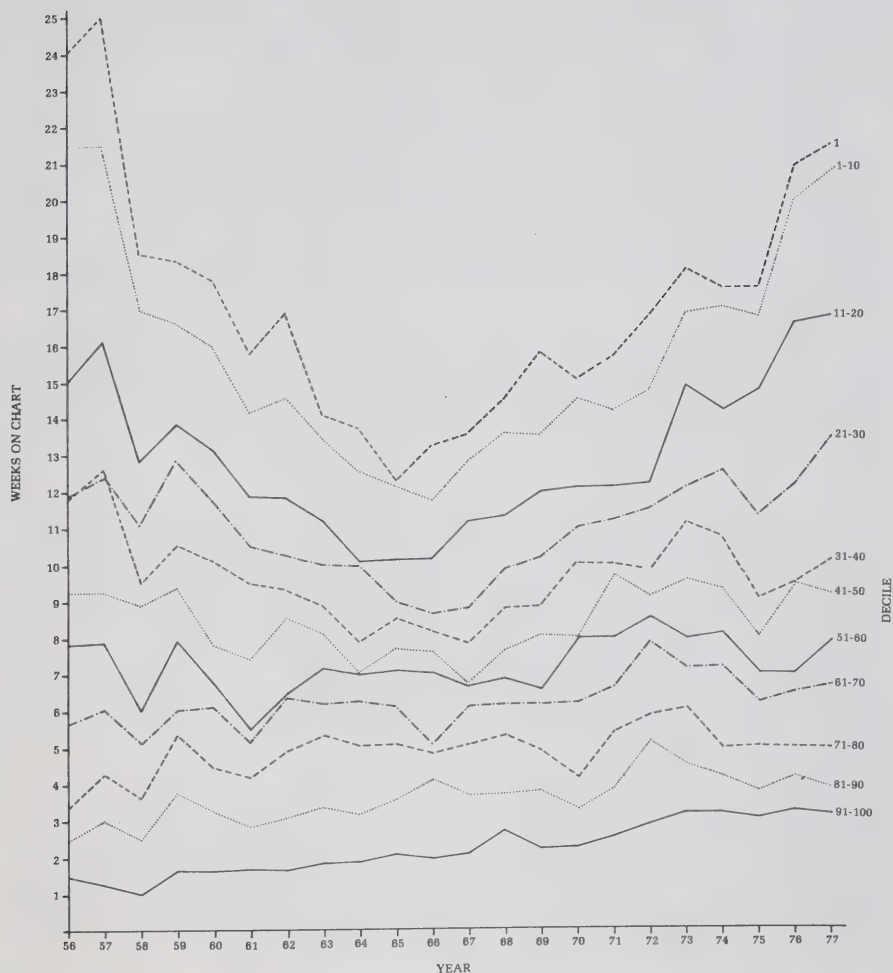
From 1956 to 1977, 13,475 selections entered the *Billboard* Top 100 charts. This figure averages out to approximately 610 selections per year (see graph at bottom of page 9). The annual number of chart entries for this period varied from a low of 465 in 1977 to a high of 740 in 1966 and 1967.

The increase in the number of entries which took place between 1954 and 1958 was fairly evenly distributed throughout the Top 100 except in positions 11 to 20 where a decrease occurred and in the Top 10 where a proportionately higher increase occurred than in positions 21 to 100 (see decile graphs for 1955 to 1958, page 4). The greater airplay of the Top 10, and radio's resulting shift in emphasis from the Top 20 to the Top 10 during these transitional years, may explain the realignments in the 1-to-10 and 11-to-20 positions.

The graphic representation of the number of entries into the Top 100 per year for the rock era is basically a bell curve (reaching highs in 1966 and 1967 and lows in 1957 and 1977; see bottom right graph on page 9). A breakdown of the statistics suggests five cyclical stages in rock's development up to 1977 (see bottom left graph on page 9). An interpretive explanation of this phenomenon is attempted in the next section.

Since few comprehensive studies have been done on the number of records annually released in the US, it is almost impossible to determine the relationship between the number of records released and the number of singles which enter the Top 100 charts. However, a number of experts contacted ventured estimates on US annual releases. John Sippel, who is on *Billboard's* editorial board, said that in the early 1970s approximately 7,000 albums and 5,500 singles were released annually in the US. Estimates for the mid-1960s, on the other hand, are as high as 300 singles

Graph F
Average Number of Weeks That Average Selections in Each
Decile Remained on the Charts in the Years 1956 to 1977



released per week or approximately 15,000 singles per year. Although these figures seem a little high, they are not unreasonable since the mid-1960s were very productive musically. Two other factors that support these figures are that singles were very popular at the time, and that albums often included a number of a group's popular selections; the figures thus do not imply that three times as many (or 21,000) albums were released annually in the US during the mid-1960s.

Furthermore, Sippel estimated that the number of records annually released in the US in the late 1970s had not changed much since the early 1970s, that is, 7,000 albums and 5,500 singles. He suggested that a slight decrease may have occurred in the number of singles released since the early 1970s due to the diminishing role of singles and the increasing importance of albums over the last decade.

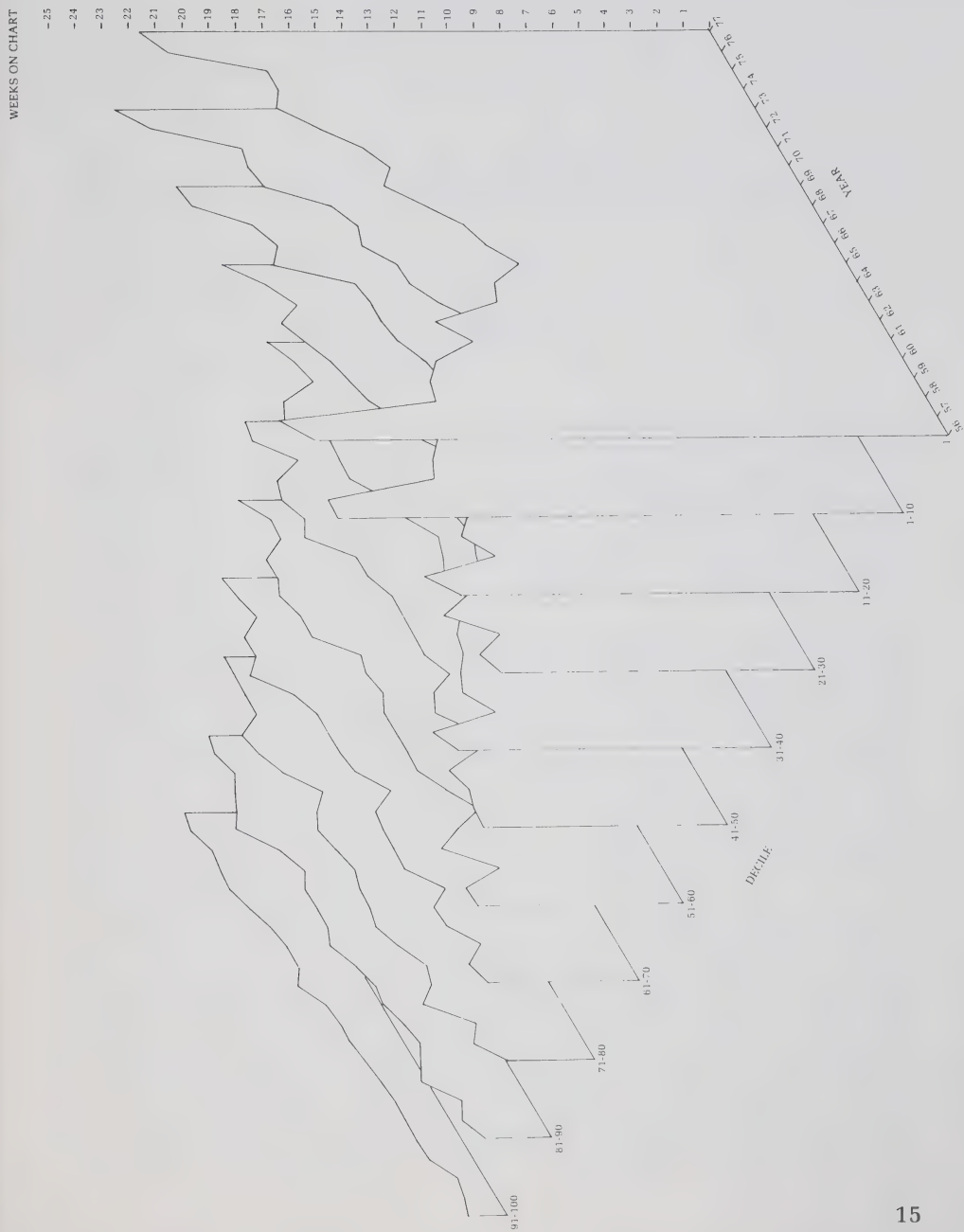
The *Schwann Record and Tape Guide* listed approximately 5,900 new LPs in 1977 and the same in 1978. Of these, 40% were classical, 50% were non-classical (including popular, jazz, musicals, and international) and 10% were not accounted for. *Schwann*, incidentally, does not list singles. Paul Crapo, *Schwann* assistant editor, estimated that their figures represented approximately 85% of all the albums released in the US that year.

On the other hand a study conducted in 1978 by the Recording Industry Association of America produced a substantially different figure. It found that approximately 4,200 albums and 3,100 singles were released that year. Henry Brief, executive director of RIAA, estimated that these figures represented 90% of all the records released in the US that year.

The suggestion that the oil crisis and the rumoured shortage of petroleum-based polyvinyl chloride, PVC, used to make records, forced record companies to reduce the number of new releases appears to be unfounded: first, because there does not appear to have been a dramatic decrease in the number of new releases since the early 1970s, and second, because there appears to have been a substantial increase in record sales over the last decade. According to *Billboard*, there was a 50% increase in the revenue from LPs and a 70% increase in the number of LPs sold between 1972 and 1978. This would tend to indicate a sufficient quantity of PVC was available.

Since both sides of a single usually appear as album cuts and 10 selections on the average appear on every album, then between 45,000 and 70,000 selections are released in the US annually. Therefore, only approximately 1% of all selections released ever make it onto the Top 100 charts; 0.5% reach the Top 40; 0.3% reach the Top 20; and only 0.2% of all selections released ever make it into the Top 10.

Graph G
Average Number of Weeks That Average Selections in Each Decile Remained on the Charts in the Years 1956 to 1977



The Cycles of Rock

The Top 100 charts show five cycles, each being marked by an increase, a peak, and finally a decrease in the number of charted entries. The five cycles are:

1. the birth of rock'n'roll (1954-1957)
2. the development of rock'n'roll (1958-1963)
3. the British invasion (1964-1965)
4. the development of rock (1966-1974)
5. the disco trend (1975-1977).

The birth of rock'n'roll begins the first cycle in the rock era. It lasted from 1954 to 1957, reaching a peak year for chart entries in 1956 when 500 selections entered the charts. Although there was a slight drop in the number of charted selections the following year, 1957 proved to be one of rock'n'roll's most important years as many of its greatest artists appeared on the charts then: Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, The Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly, The Coasters, Fats Domino, Little Richard, Sam Cooke, Paul Anka, and Jerry Lee Lewis.

During the second cycle, which lasted from 1958 to 1963, rock'n'roll continued to evolve and gain in popularity. While the peak year for chart entries in this stage was 1961, when 700 selections were charted, 1962 and 1963 were musically more memorable although the number of chart entries tapered off to 660 selections. During these two years some important rock'n'roll genres emerged such as the dance crazes (the twist and the limbo rock to name two), surf music (The Beach Boys and Jan and Dean were the most popular), and the rhythm'n'blues-based Spector and Motown sounds (The Ronettes and The Crystals with Phil Spector, and The Miracles and the The Marvelettes with Motown).

A third cycle began in 1964 as a result of the blues and rhythm'n'blues revival in Britain and the sudden popularity of the Motown sound. These two trends stimulated the music industry by familiarizing white audiences with lesser known styles of black music and by presenting the market with new rock genres which were highly attractive and quite different from those preceding. While virtually no British acts appeared on the *Billboard* charts in 1963, in 1964 and 1965 approximately 25% of the Top 40 was British, The Beatles leading the invasion. The rise of the Motown sound can be attributed largely to the compositional skills of the Holland-Dozier-Holland team and the vocal talents of The Supremes

and The Four Tops. The peak year in this cycle was 1964, when 730 selections entered the charts. Although a slight drop to 705 selections took place in 1965, the year was musically as innovative as the previous one. An important new musical genre appearing in 1965 was folk-rock. Initially popularized by Bob Dylan and The Byrds, this style helped open the way for the softer rock styles of the 1970s.

The fourth cycle, lasting from 1966 to 1974, is in many ways a continuation of the third cycle. Although the number of British selections entering the charts began tapering off after 1966, British artists continued to be active, innovative, and influential. By the mid- and late 1960s numerous British artists had reached cult or superstar status and many have continued to record until the present day. They include The Rolling Stones, The Who, and members of The Beatles and The Hollies.

The Motown sound also continued to be popular and helped promote soul music, which became an important and influential musical genre between 1966 and 1969. Soul was brought to its heights by artists such as Otis Redding, James Brown, Wilson Pickett, and Aretha Franklin.

The large number of chart entries in 1966 and 1967—the peak years for chart entries in the history of rock—includes much new and experimental music. Not only did new rock-based styles begin to develop during this period but a public awareness of these styles evolved as well. For example, blues-rock, acid-rock, heavy-rock, art-rock, jazz-rock, country-rock, and a host of pop-rock styles ranging from Tommy James and the Shondells to Neil Diamond, appear in this period.

From 1968 to 1974 the number of charted selections dropped from 740 to 500, a 32% decrease. Two probable reasons for this drop are that record companies, aware that certain artists and musical styles were more profitable than others, concentrated their promotion on acts which guaranteed them greater returns; and that radio stations, in order to increase their audience, became more critical in eliminating new material and relied more heavily on music that appealed to larger demographic segments.

By the late 1960s a hierarchy of superstars and cult groups had been established; certain musicians had proved themselves to be musically versatile and could be relied on to produce music which was not only of high quality but also financially profitable. Record companies tended to promote these established artists, rather than unknown new artists who required a greater amount of promotion with perhaps smaller or riskier returns.

Cult groups usually received a fair degree of promotion but often did not receive extensive airplay. These groups relied primarily on touring, on exposure given to them by progressive and album-oriented radio, and on their following which bought their albums regardless of the hit content. Bands such as Traffic, The Grateful Dead, The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, John Mayall and the Blues Breakers, and The Allman Brothers Band are a few of the more notable and successful cult groups.

In the late 1960s radio stations, to maintain an aging rock audience, began programming an increasing amount of softer rock rather than a diversity of music of less consistent mass appeal. In turn, record

companies and artists began recording softer types of rock and adhering to certain musical formulas in order to get the mandatory radio exposure. Also, many of the established artists mellowed with their fans and so continued to receive Top 40 radio airplay. Combining some of rock's vitality with lyrical and plaintive melody lines, soft-rock, as it became known, appealed to a wide variety of listeners and between 1968 and 1976 gained wide acceptance. As a result new artists and musical styles found it more difficult than usual to receive airplay. However, the development of the progressive and album-oriented radio (AOR) formats provided new outlets for these new artists and styles.

The increasing sophistication of techniques and equipment, both in recording and reproduction, and of audio technology as a whole, developed proportionately with the public's awareness of music and the demand for quality sound. The result was that any selection had to be well crafted and impeccably produced in order for it to become a hit. This requirement limited recorded music's access to radio airplay even further.

Progressive and AOR stations were instrumental in promoting new artists and styles and albums as a whole. Although these formats did play and break some hits, Top 40 stations were the ones primarily responsible for creating and selling hits. Over the past five years, however, progressive and AOR stations' role in creating hits by playing album cuts has become increasingly important. Album cuts receiving favorable response in a market area are then played on Top 40 stations, and in turn released as singles by the record companies.

A milestone in the recording industry was the release in 1967 of The Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts' Club Band" album which was conceived as a unified collection of songs, rather than as a random assortment of singles. The "concept" album helped shift radio's emphasis from singles to albums. There was also a substantial increase in the number of record collectors and buyers who bought albums regardless of their hit content, and this in turn helped establish progressive and AOR formats. Additional airplay given to album cuts by these stations further stimulated sales, although the decreasing number of selections entering the Top 100 charts might indicate otherwise. The recording industry's fears that a slump would take place once the rock generation outgrew its teen years gradually subsided as record sales continued to climb.

The fifth cycle began in 1975, when, after a continuous seven-year decline in the number of chart entries, there was an abrupt 13% increase. This increase can be attributed largely to the rising interest in discotheques and the accompanying sophistication of disco music. While in 1974 none of the 500 selections entering the charts were disco selections and few were dance-related, in 1975 approximately 15% of the selections in the Top 40 were disco or disco-oriented. By 1977, approximately 25% of the selections in the Top 100 charts were disco or disco-oriented. Soft-rock continued to get extensive airplay throughout this period, and soft-rock stars such as Linda Ronstadt, Abba, Fleetwood Mac, and Captain and Tenille had pretty well become the mainstay of the charts.

In 1977 an all-time low of 465 selections entered the Top 100 charts, a 37% drop from the peak years 1966 and 1967. However, because a substantial number of new artists and especially New Wave artists have entered the charts since 1977, it is possible that an increase in the number of chart entries is now taking place, and that a new cycle has begun. While AM radio is largely responsible for the exposure given to disco, FM radio is primarily responsible for breaking New Wave artists such as The Cars and Cheap Trick who consequently have received increased AM airplay and have appeared more frequently on the charts.

An examination of the "add on" list of *Radio and Record* (another music industry trade magazine) for 1979 supports the view that smaller stations, probably because they have less to lose than the larger ones, are more adventurous and willing to program untried selections. Larger stations generally appear more cautious, adding to their playlists only those selections which they feel will receive favorable response in their market area, having been "tested" in other markets. Once the major stations playlist a selection, other stations add it to their playlists. Understandably, extreme or innovative changes in music programming tend to take place when a station's ratings begin to fall, at which time the station either adjusts its playlist to present music trends or changes its format altogether.

A review of the data clearly indicates that rock and probably other types of popular music have evolved, and will probably continue to evolve, in cycles. The cycle begins—or ends—when radio stations, in order to boost falling ratings, start programming a wide variety of new artists and musical genres. The exposure given to new trends stimulates the industry by encouraging new artists to record and established artists to change their styles. Once there is a demand for the new artists or trends, the radio stations tend to return to conservatism and to give airplay primarily to material which maintains their audience. Record companies, in turn, capitalize on the financially profitable artists until the artist becomes "used up" or overexposed and so is no longer profitable. At this point the stations again begin programming a wider variety of new artists and musical genres.

The Importance of a Hit

About 1% of all the selections released in the US reaches the charts, and only half of these enter the Top 40. (For a selection to enter the Top 40 or even the Top 10 still does not guarantee a profit; on the other hand, some records which are distributed only locally make money.)

For a new artist, the benefits of having a hit record are that record companies will usually finance an album and a tour to follow up the hit, and will promote the artist to varying degrees depending on what they feel the dividends will be. Record companies claim that one out of 10 albums makes money, two out of 10 break even, and the other seven lose money. They also estimate that it currently costs approximately \$250,000 to record and promote a new artist. Record companies' hesitancy to promote a host of new artists is understandable.

The recording industry has changed immensely since the day Elvis recorded a song for \$5 and the Colonel sold photographs of the star at his concerts; however, the principle and ethics of the recording industry of both eras remain the same: profit is the motivation, and the artist is a commodity.

Promotion undoubtedly plays an important role in popularizing and selling the artist or musical genre or both. The recording industry promotes the product either because it is financially profitable or because it feels that it might be, and radio gives airplay to the material which it feels will maintain or augment audience and thus commercial revenue.

Finally, the mechanics of the recording and broadcasting industries and their interrelationship neither cancel nor corrupt the importance of rock as an artistic medium. The period from 1956 on may be one of the few periods in history in which so many artists have been able to communicate to so many, and have been so well rewarded for their efforts.

Glossary

Almost every book that has been written on rock has avoided definitions of rock and rock genres, and has used examples instead. Perhaps since almost everyone is familiar with rock it seems almost redundant to try to define it; also, it appears that people are concerned with discussing rock more as a historical or sociological phenomenon, as in the relationship between rock rhythms and promiscuity, than as a musical one.

Because rock includes many closely intertwined genres, it is actually more difficult to define than one might believe. However, a few general comments can be made:

1. Rock evolved out of rock'n'roll which was a combination of country music and rhythm'n'blues.
2. Rock is almost entirely in 4/4 time, "thump, thump, thump, thump," rather than "oom pah pah" which is 3/4 time.
3. Almost all rock includes drums and bass in its instrumentation in order to accentuate the beat.
4. Electronically amplified instruments are almost always present.
5. Any kind of instrumental combination is possible.

The following descriptions of some of the principal rock genres are meant to serve as a general guideline to understanding the evolution of rock as presented in this study. Two points should be brought out: first, some of the musical areas described in the following pages, while having at least part of their origins in rock, may not be a legitimate part of the rock legacy: they are included mainly to round out the picture. The second is that some of the musical selections by artists mentioned in the descriptions may fall into other categories (including non-rock ones). Strict categorization would, in fact, depend on the characteristics of the particular selection.

ACID-ROCK Popular between 1966 and 1968, acid-rock's main trait was that it drew its inspiration from the excessive use of drugs. Musically, it covered a large variety of styles such as heavy-rock (Jimi Hendrix, Iron Butterfly), blues-oriented rock (The Doors) and British- or Beatles-influenced rock (Jefferson Airplane). The lyrics to the songs were often drug-oriented or bizarre and the music

frequently plagued by over-extended instrumental solos. These solos eventually helped lead the way to the more sophisticated jazz-rock.

ART-ROCK Somewhat less pretentiously known as classical rock, art-rock is the inevitable rendez-vous of classics and rock in which formally trained musicians play more intricate and highly structured types of rock. Procol Harum, whose first hit "A Whiter Shade of Pale" appeared in 1967, was the first art-rock band; Emerson, Lake and Palmer (Emerson previously with The Nice, also an art-rock band) was probably the most technically proficient.

BLUES Blues is both a type of music and a musical structure—the music based, of course, on the musical structure. Structurally, blues are usually 8, 12, or 16 bars long and harmonically based on a recurring three-chord progression. Types of blues include folk or country blues, played by artists such as Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, rhythm'n'blues ranging from Muddy Waters to The Coasters, blues-rock which includes Johnny Winter, John Mayall, Canned Heat, and Janis Joplin, and jazz-oriented blues such as Coleman Hawkins and Joe Turner.

BLUES-ROCK The folk music revival of the late 1950s helped expose many of the country blues artists who had been almost unknown at the time. Young white audiences, in particular, were fascinated by the music and soon cultivated an interest in the amplified blues or rhythm'n'blues of the black bands on Chicago's Southside such as Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf, Otis Spann, and Junior Wells. Blues-rock bands basically copied the sound of the Chicago blues bands but were more polished, energetic, and louder. Blues-rock bands include Ten Years After, Canned Heat, Johnny Winter, The J. Geils Band, and John Mayall.

BRITISH INVASION Though Britain had its rock'n'roll counterparts in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it had little original to offer. In the early 1960s, however, a rhythm'n'blues revival took place in Britain, which stimulated the British music industry and produced innumerable groups. The Beatles led the way for the great influx of British bands entering the American charts from 1964 to 1966. The Rolling Stones and The Animals were two other influential British bands during this period. While The Beatles' most significant contributions were their compositional style and their approach to vocal harmony, The Rolling Stones and The Animals were influential primarily because of their unique and dynamic interpretations of rhythm'n'blues. The British invasion was important because it produced a variety of new rock styles; it familiarized white audiences and musicians with lesser known styles of black music; and it stimulated the recording industry on both sides of the Atlantic.

COUNTRY-ROCK Country-rock was originally an extension of folk-rock, adding bluegrass and country music elements such as the pedal steel guitar, more intricate instrumental lines, and more polished arrangements. Over the past five years, however, country artists have tended to get rockier in order to have wider appeal. There are, therefore, two basic country rock styles, one based on country and one on rock; the former includes artists such as Charlie Daniels and Barefoot Jerry, the latter, Poco, Loggins and Messina, and The Eagles.

DANCE CRAZES Almost impossible to define, the dance crazes were more a phenomenon of the early 1960s than a style of rock. The leaders of the dance crazes were Chubby Checker, Little Eva, Dee Dee Sharp, and Joey Dee and the Starlites. Originating from music that was a cross between pop-rock, rhythm'n'blues and rock'n'roll, these dances included the twist, the limbo rock, the pony, the mashed potato, the swim, the loco-motion, the monster mash, the wah-watusi, the hitch hiker, the hully gully, the push and kick, the surfer's stomp, the bristol stomp, the monkey, the jerk, the bird, the martian hop, the bounce, and the fish—to name a few.

DISCO Although disco music has existed for a good 20 years, disco music as we know it today emerged in 1975. It is basically a combination of rhythm'n'blues, soul, and funk.⁷ The added interaction with jazz, rock, and Latin elements and a heavily accented four beats to the bar created the present energetic, danceable music. In the late 1970s the more popular disco artists were The Bee Gees, KC and the Sunshine Band, Donna Summer, The Village People, and Gloria Gaynor.

“DOO-WOP” GROUPS Popular in the mid-1950s, the “Doo-Wop” groups were black vocal groups who sang in an *a cappella*⁸ style. They acquired the name “Doo-Wop” because they used a variety of vocal effects such as “dup da da dup da” and “dum be doo be dum” to accompany and accentuate the lead vocals. Examples of “Doo-Wop” songs and groups are “Sh-boom” by The Chords and “Earth Angel” by The Penguins.

FOLK-ROCK The folk music revival which started in the late 1950s had by 1964 become an important movement, saturated with folk purists who would have little or nothing to do with rock'n'roll since they felt it was commercially produced for the masses somewhere over in Tin Pan Alley. Nonetheless, in the early 1960s groups such as The Kingston Trio and Peter, Paul and Mary each released over a dozen charted selections. However, at the time no one dared desecrate folk music by playing it with rock instruments. Trini

7. Funk: A rhythmic soul-based music, superimposing jazz and Latin elements on syncopated bass figures.

8. *A cappella*: Choral music sung unaccompanied.

Lopez's rocking version of "If I Had a Hammer" reached the Number Three position in 1963, and could be considered the first folk-rock song; however, folk-rock became a popular genre only in 1965 with the release of The Byrds' version of "Mr. Tambourine Man" composed by Bob Dylan. The leaders of the folk-rock movement were Bob Dylan, Simon and Garfunkel, The Lovin' Spoonful, The Byrds, and The Youngbloods. One of folk-rock's most important traits was that it emphasized the lyrics, the music being used primarily to enhance and project the words. This development inspired rock composers generally to write more meaningful lyrics. By 1968 most folk-rock had evolved into country-rock or soft-rock.

GIRL GROUPS The girl groups of the early 1960s were an answer to the male "Doo-Wop" and rhythm'n'blues groups of the mid- and late 1950s such as The Coasters and The Drifters. Two of the first girl groups were The Shirelles and The Marvelettes, both of which first came out with hits in 1961. Phil Spector, an independent producer who had worked with Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller (producers of The Coasters and The Drifters, and composers of innumerable hits including "Hound Dog" and "Love Potion #9") helped polish the girl-group sound with two important groups, The Crystals and The Ronettes. Other girl groups included The Orlons, The Chiffons, The Cookies, The Angels, The Raindrops, and Martha and the Vandellas.

HEAVY-ROCK Heavy-rock evolved out of blues-rock and was deeply influenced by acid-rock. Originally based on blues structures, this genre featured extended solos, repetitive bass lines, and a somewhat spasmodic style of drumming which nonetheless emphasized four beats to the bar. The leading interpreters of this genre were Cream, Jimi Hendrix, Steppenwolf, Iron Butterfly, Deep Purple, and Led Zeppelin.

JAZZ-ROCK Jazz-rock, like heavy-rock, was based on blues forms and featured extended solos. The harmonic structure and arrangements of the music were usually more elaborate, and the bands (Blood, Sweat and Tears, for example, or Chicago) often used horn sections as an integral part of their sound. Many of the younger jazz artists such as Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and Chuck Mangione can also fit into this category although their jazz roots are apparent.

MOTOWN In 1960 Berry Gordy, an assembly-line worker in Detroit, borrowed \$600 and started what was purported to be the first all-black record company, Tammie, later renamed Tamla. By 1961 he was also releasing material on two other labels, Gordy and Motown, and was recording acts such as Mary Wells, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, and The Marvelettes. Others who eventually recorded for Tamla-Motown and formed the heart of the Motor City or Motown sound were Marvin Gaye, Martha and the Vandellas, The Four Tops, The Temptations, The Supremes, and Stevie Wonder.

MOR-ROCK Middle-Of-the-Road-rock is the next best thing to shopping music. One of MOR-rock's first interpreters was Pat Boone who can best be described as taking the works of Fats Domino and Little Richard (two rock'n'roll greats) and making them bland. The importance of MOR-rock in the 1950s was that it brought rock'n'roll into middle-class homes and helped make the term rock'n'roll respectable. The majority of the songs which fall into this category however, can hardly be considered rock since they are basically traditional MOR songs which have succumbed to rock influences such as the instrumentation and the beat, in order to gain wider appeal. Today, even Frank Sinatra and Al Martino are recording material which falls into this category, but its main contemporary interpreters are Barry Manilow, Helen Reddy, and Engelbert Humperdinck.

NEW WAVE ROCK Punk-rock was originally referred to as "new wave," however, once it became more aptly known as punk-rock, the more sophisticated genre which it nurtured was labelled New Wave. While New Wave, like punk-rock, believes in the return to rock'n'roll roots or to simpler forms of rock, unlike punk-rock it contains a harmonic structure, its melodies are more lyrical, its lyrics substantially more interesting, and its arrangements more polished. Elvis Costello, Graham Parker, Blondie, The Cars, and The Knack fall into this category.

POP-ROCK In an attempt to sell rock'n'roll to an older audience, record companies in the late 1950s began to promote a number of wholesome-looking white boys who sang a smoother type of rock'n'roll. Among them were Frankie Avalon, Fabian, and Bobby Rydell. Although the terms "commercial" and "popular" are not synonymous in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in broadcasting's lexicon they are often interchangeable. And so, while the industry might consider the dance crazes, surf music, the girl groups, the Motown sound, and even The Beatles as pop-rock, the term is still best used to describe the type of rock sung by The Osmonds, Tommy James and the Shondells, and Jay and the Americans. Less saccharine performers include The Four Seasons, Neil Diamond, Anne Murray, and The Fifth Dimension.

PUNK-ROCK A description that might be acceptable to Grove's *Dictionary of Music*:

Tired of the over-arrangement, over-production, and general staleness of rock music in the mid-1970s, a number of younger musicians began a "return to rock'n'roll and its roots" movement. Their frustration and enthusiasm was manifest in anarchistic lyrics and extremely loud, energetic, though somewhat simplistic music which became known as punk-rock.

Punk-rock groups include Johnny Rotten and the Sex Pistols, The Dead Boys, The Stranglers, and The Vibrators.

RHYTHM'N'BLUES The term rhythm'n'blues was first used to describe the blues played by black bands using drums and electronically amplified instruments, but its use gradually spread to include numerous types of blues-based black music that developed in the mid- and late 1950s. Examples of the latter are Lavern Baker, Chuck Willis, The Coasters, The Drifters, Ivory Joe Hunter, and The Clovers. Examples of the former are Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Little Walter, and Sonny Boy Williamson.

ROCK'N'ROLL Charlie Gillett in *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock'n'Roll*⁹ divides rock'n'roll into five styles:

In the years 1954 to 1956, there were five distinctive styles developing almost completely independently of one another, that collectively became known as rock'n'roll: northern brand rock'n'roll, whose most popular example was Bill Haley; the New Orleans dance blues; Memphis country rock (also known as rockabilly); Chicago rhythm and blues; and vocal group rock'n'roll. All five styles, and their variants associated with each of them, depended for their dancebeat on contemporary Negro dance rhythms.

While the rock'n'roll era includes these five styles, the term rock'n'roll refers primarily to the Memphis and northern rock'n'roll styles which were a fusion of rhythm'n'blues and western or country swing which was played by artists such as Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys. These two styles began the rock'n'roll era and introduced black music to white audiences, making it possible for the other styles to enter the white market. The rock'n'roll greats include Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Fats Domino (although the latter was closely associated with the New Orleans tradition).

SOFT-ROCK As the post-war generation grew older, its musical tastes mellowed and so softer types of rock came into fashion. In order to cater to these tastes and to appeal to larger demographic segments, radio stations in the late 1960s began programming an increasing amount of softer types of rock. Artists, realizing that by playing softer kinds of rock they had easier access to radio airplay, in turn began recording more melodic, more polished, and smoother types of rock. In the early 1970s folk-oriented artists such as Carole King and James Taylor became very popular. Other soft-rock artists are Paul Simon, Bread, and Fleetwood Mac. Since the term soft-rock encompasses a variety of styles, it refers more to a literally softer kind of rock than a general style.

SOUL Soul is particularly hard to describe because it has come to include almost all black music; however, taken in its strictest sense, soul is an extremely energetic and polished rhythm'n'blues-based

9. New York, NY: Dutton, 1970.

music which reached its peak between 1966 and 1969 with artists such as Otis Redding, James Brown, Aretha Franklin, and Wilson Pickett. One of the particular traits of soul ballads (if indeed ballads can qualify as soul) is that their delivery is filled with a power, drive, and tension that is lacking in the lighter and smoother ballads of black artists such as Dionne Warwick, Diana Ross, and Lou Rawls.

SURF MUSIC In combining the vocal stylings of The Four Freshmen and Chuck Berry's rhythms and arrangements with lyrics about the teenage preoccupations of the day such as dating, cars, and the California craze (surfing), The Beach Boys created surf music, a style which was popular between 1963 and 1966. Other surf groups were Jan and Dean, and The Surfaris.

